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ABSTRACT

The "technical training" tradition in teacher education originated in the normal schools and, under the pressures of national growth and expansion, was continued in the teachers' colleges and university colleges and departments of education. It is reflected in the rigid certification requirements now maintained by state legislatures and state departments of education, which in turn limit the amount of flexibility possible in the curriculum of teacher education institutions. It is reinforced by the eclectic nature of the psychology component of the curriculum and by the lack of provision in the curriculum for reflective thinking and for discussion of the fundamental assumptions upon which educational practice is based. The result is that teacher education pays more attention to the "how-to-do-it" question than to the "why-we-do-it" question, and expends more energy on what is than on what ought to be. Even major alternative teacher education curriculum model projects have failed to alter this fundamental orientation or even to challenge it. (Author/DS)

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TEACHER TRAINING: THE FUTILE 135-YEAR SEARCH FOR
A FOOLPROOF FORMULA

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B. J. Benham

By the early 19th century, the great forces of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration were in full swing, and Horace Mann successfully and almost singlehandedly established the modern school system, partly as a reaction to certain aspects of these forces; he felt that it was important for a diverse society to have some basis of commonality--hence, the concept of the "common school."

By the 1830's, common schools were spreading rapidly across the young nation, and the "normal schools" were organized in order to meet the growing demand for teachers. In most normal schools, a review of the common branches of learning and a how-to-do-it focus on "schoolkeeping" formed the bulk of the program, although a few offered a much more comprehensive--almost a liberal--education (Woodring, 1975).

As Silberman points out, the success of the normal schools in meeting the educational needs of the period from 1840 to the early 1900's firmly established a "second tradition, emphasizing professional or technical training rather than liberal education" (Silberman, 1970, p. 418). The "first" tradition was, of course, the liberal arts college training open primarily to young men during that

period of time. The normal schools, by contrast, recruited women. It was, for most, their only chance of an education beyond the eighth grade and the best route to an acceptable and respectable career.

In 1848, the first age-graded school opened in Quincy, Massachusetts, and as the public school population mushroomed nationwide, the "Quincy Plan" became enormously popular. In the normal schools, from that point on, instruction could be limited to what a teacher would need to know to be a competent technician at just one grade level.

As more and more young Americans began to stay in school beyond the eighth grade, the normal schools began to require a high school diploma of entering students and some of them lengthened their programs from two years to four, adding academic courses to the teacher preparation curriculum. At the same time, more and more faculty members in the normal schools were college graduates, who "thought it would be more prestigious to be professors in a college than instructors in a normal school" (Woodring, 1975, p. 5). Eventually the effect of these forces combined to support a shift in status, and the normal schools became teachers' colleges; in fact, as Woodring points out, by 1940 the term "normal school" was virtually obsolete. In many places, teachers' colleges were already being incorporated into large, multipurpose public universities as colleges or departments of education.

Just as the normal schools had met the growing need for trained elementary school teachers for the common schools, the four-year teachers' colleges

and the university departments or colleges of education were overwhelmed by the unexpected need to train huge numbers of high school teachers. The population of the nation was growing, and more students were staying in school for the full twelve years. Faced with this kind of urgency, the "technical-training" tradition established in the normal schools was adopted as a quick way of turning out competent classroom technicians for the high schools, and by the 1920's this tradition was deeply embedded in the nation's assumptions about teacher education. In the 1930's and 1940's "the normal school emphasis on technical training in how to teach carried over into state certification requirements" (Silberman, 1970, p. 433), and has been firmly fixed there ever since. "Almost everywhere, in consequence, teacher education was geared to preparing teachers and administrators to be technicians in the schools as they were"(Silberman, 1970, p. 430).

This underlying purpose--technical training--was not threatened by the expansion of the teacher preparation curriculum during the last years of the 19th and early years of the 20th centuries, and in fact some of the additions and innovations may have helped to fix it even more firmly in place. For example, the influence of Herbart from 1890 to 1905 and the enduring "five formal steps of teaching" formula can be seen as a distinctly technical approach to teacher preparation which had the long-lasting effect of reinforcing the "how-to-do-it" conception of teacher education.

The year that marked the start of the child-centered "progressive" movement, which was influential during the 1920's is generally considered to be 1895.

While this movement had little effect on the secondary schools, which have remained stubbornly subject-centered, it did serve to call some attention to the needs and interests of students as an alternative basis for curriculum planning. In 1904, G. Stanley Hall published Adolescence, putting "the pedagogical spotlight on adolescence as a period of mental and physical development and stimulated inquiries into the psychological significance of adolescence" (Tanner and Tanner, 1975, p. 221). The child-study movement thus stimulated by Hall, though essentially conservative and laissez-faire in its philosophical grounding, seemed to fit in nicely with the child-centered progressive movement.

Early in the 20th century, a changing definition of psychology began to have an impact on education, and on teacher education: Psychology was redefined as "the science of behavior rather than the science of consciousness" (Woodring, 1975, p. 13), and the focus of educational purpose was effectively shifted from the promotion of understanding to the observable demonstration of desired behavior.

"The behavioristic revolution that swept over American psychology between 1914 and 1920 had profound implications for teacher education," Woodring observes. In effect, it directed the attention of teacher educators and teacher trainees towards those methods and mechanisms that would reinforce the behavior thought to be appropriate for the classroom, thus supporting the technical, "how-to-do-it" framework of education long since established by the normal schools.

In addition to the new behaviorist movement in psychology and educational psychology, the child study movement begun by Hall was preserved in the teacher

education curriculum in the form of courses in adolescent psychology. In the 1950's, the rediscovery of the work of Jean Piaget added yet another dimension to the educational psychology curriculum. In fact, all of the psychological schools of thought of the 20th century are represented in the EdPsych courses now required of secondary teacher trainees. This is confusing for the student, who often does not yet have a philosophical base or conceptual framework sufficient for understanding the difference between, for example, Gestalt theories, psychoanalytic theories, and behaviorist theories--and even less for making personal choices between them. As Woodring points out, even

. . . educational psychologists, like other psychologists, found it impossible to integrate these conflicting points of view into a single system. As a result, textbooks in educational psychology became eclectic, presenting conflicting theories of child development, learning, motivation, and emotion, and leaving it to the students to achieve an integration which the professors and the textbook writers had failed to achieve. (Woodring, 1975, p. 15)

Confronted with this confusing variety of basic assumptions, and in the absence of rigorous educational history and philosophy courses that might give them the insights they would need to develop conceptual frameworks for themselves (not to mention the total absence from the teacher education curriculum of any built-in opportunities for reflection and self-awareness), it is hardly surprising that teacher trainees have tended to take refuge in the show-me-how-to-do-it, just-give-me-the-recipe attitude. At least it is familiar; and, as we have seen, it has a long history, stemming as it does from the earliest teacher training institutions, the normal schools.

In 1948, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) was formed through a merger of several other organizations and became the national accrediting agency for teacher preparation. Additionally, concern for the quality of the student teaching experience and higher standards for teacher education generally, led to the formation of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in 1952. In 1957, the orbiting of Sputnik gave added impetus to yet another wave of scrutiny and discussion of the quality of American education in general and teacher education in particular.

So urgent became the concern for the quality of teacher education that the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards (TEPS) convened three conferences on the subject in 1958, 1959, and 1960. The 1958 conference dealt primarily with the nature of the undergraduate program, and succeeded in bringing together teacher educators and academic specialists and in eliciting agreement from both that knowing what to teach (subject matter) and how to teach (pedagogy) are both important and should both be the responsibility of the entire university.

The 1959 conference dealt primarily with the nature of the student teaching component of teacher training, and with various proposed models for the reform of teacher education. The great differences in certification requirements from state to state surfaced as a concern of the 1959 conference, and as a result, the issue of certification was made the primary focus of the 1960 conference. It was agreed that the "history of teacher certification in this country is a chronicle

of chaos," according to Hodenfield and Stinnett, whose book, The Education of Teachers (1961, p. 102) is the more or less official record of the TEPS conferences. Not only were there vast differences in certification requirements from state to state, making it difficult for teachers to relocate without having to take extra coursework, but in most states the certification requirements were so inflexible that the school systems were prevented from taking advantage of talented people in the community who had much to offer children but who lacked "enough hours" or "the right courses."

And finally, of course, the range of quality nationwide in teacher education programs was, and is, so vast that simply having earned a certificate does not mean that one is a good teacher; it does not necessarily even mean that one has passed through a decent program of preparation (Hodenfield and Stinnett, 1961, p. 99).

Since 1961, reciprocity agreements have been made between about two thirds of the states, but the range of quality among teacher education programs, despite the leveling effects of regular NCATE reviews, remains.

The following were among the recommendations that came out of the three TEPS conferences: (1) move teacher education into fifth-year programs; (2) find a way of screening those persons to be used as cooperating teachers, to ensure that only the excellent, or master teachers, are so used; (3) build more flexibility in the certification requirements; and (5) institute highly selective procedures for admission into teacher education (Hodenfield and Stinnett, 1961, p. 145).

Despite these recommendations, as of 1977: (1) most teacher education takes place at the undergraduate level; (2) most teacher education programs follow the same general format; (3) certification requirements are now quite universally standardized. In addition, it may be safely said that most universities have to use whomever they can get from the local school systems, insofar as cooperating teachers are concerned. Admission standards for entry into teacher preparation programs have never been "highly selective"--nor are they now. It seems that the recommendations made by the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards in 1961 have thus far had little impact.

A number of important books on teacher education have kept the subject more or less constantly in the public eye since the late 1950's--in addition to the Hodenfield and Stinnett volume already mentioned (The Education of Teachers, 1961), The Education of American Teachers (Conant, 1963), The Professional Education of Teachers (Combs, 1965), and Crisis in the Classroom (Silberman, 1970) deserve mention. Such exposure has not necessarily resulted in the strengthening of teacher education programs, however. Merrill (1967) identifies the tradition of marginal financing for education, long-standing confusion about roles and responsibilities, lack of agreement on operationally defined roles and purposes, and the low status of teacher education in academia among the reasons for the continuing, recognized weaknesses of teacher preparation programs.

The expansive national mood of the 1960's was felt in teacher education, not in efforts to make some of the fundamental changes suggested by the TEPS conferences or to grapple with the basic issues identified by Merrill, but somewhat

indirectly, in the area of curriculum development and in federal support of programs for the educationally disadvantaged. The National Institute of Education's 1976 Databook, "The Status of Educational Research and Development in the United States" identifies the years from 1963 to 1969 as the most vigorous period of R & D expansion and emphasizes that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 placed priorities for teacher training in the following areas: preschool; disadvantaged; bilingual; handicapped; and remedial reading (p. 17). In the same year, the Equal Opportunity Act further strengthened efforts to provide compensatory education for students in the public school, K-12. There was some effort to attract minority college students to teacher training programs. Passage of the Education Professions Development Act in 1967, intended to support the design, development, and evaluation of improved undergraduate teacher education, also established the Teacher Corps, possibly the most organized effort to widen the participatory base of the teaching profession yet attempted.

In spite of all these efforts, however, teaching remains primarily a white, middle-class institution (Report of the National Study Commission on Undergraduate Education and the Education of Teachers, 1976, pp. 48-51), and, furthermore, some attitudinal research indicates that teachers prefer to teach bright, white, middle-class students. Paul Torrance, in a 1974 study, for example, found teachers to be somewhat reluctant to work even with gifted children of cultural backgrounds different from their own (Torrance, 1974).

The last big effort to reform teacher education before the financial crunch

and subsequent educational depression of the 1970's was the Teacher Education model-building project sponsored by the United States Office of Education in 1968. Ten colleges of education, at ten different universities, were funded by USOE and charged with the task of developing new models for teacher education that would improve upon the traditional one. According to Bruce Joyce, this represented "a first generation effort to make an application of broad systems planning principles to a major area in education" (Joyce, 1972, p. 205).

Presumably the Office of Education, in funding ten such projects rather than one, three, or seven, expected to get some variety among the ten final models. This did not happen. All ten models reflected "an assumptive world comprised of management systems theory, a concern with efficiency and systematic training," and "an implicit consensus about the most productive role for the teacher today" as being an applied behavioral scientist, a "systems man" (Joyce, 1972, p. 211). In other words, the production metaphor of education--the conception of schooling as a kind of industrial activity, characterized by "inputs" and "outputs," standardized parts and products, and above all, economic efficiency--was at the bottom of every single one of the ten models developed in the course of this project.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that all ten models are based on a conservative view of teaching (as changing behavior); of the curriculum (as originating in behavioral objectives); of the mind (as a container to be filled); and of the student (as a plastic mass, to be shaped) (Apple, 1972). In his

critique of the models, Apple observes that "the concept of systems design used by most educators seems to have originated in industry's concern for efficiency in developing a standard product. It is geared to similarity of output and provides a means of quality control" (Apple, 1972, p. 240). Apple then notes the long history of task analysis in the curriculum field and its tendency to support a conservative concern with replicating what is rather than a dynamic concern for what should be. These "new" models for teacher education funded by USOE, then, continue in the tradition of technical training begun in the normal schools 135 years ago.

One cannot but wonder if the implicit search for total surety in the models does not mirror a false quest for unambiguous meanings. It may be more an attempt to construct a science of education based on the impressiveness of scientific language and explanation than on respect for the complexity of the data. The reality of children's lives and the complexity of their search for meaning in a difficult world require a far more radical conception of teaching than the behaviorism of the models has provided us. (Apple, 1972, p. 262).

Summary

We have seen that the "technical training" tradition in teacher education originated in the normal schools and, under the pressures of national growth and expansion, was continued in the teachers' colleges and university colleges and departments of education. It is reflected in the rigid certification requirements now maintained by state legislatures and state departments of education, which in turn limit the amount of flexibility possible in the curriculum of teacher education institutions. It is reinforced by the eclectic nature of the psychology component of the curriculum and by the lack of provision in the curriculum for re-

flective thinking and for discussions of the fundamental assumptions upon which educational practice is based. The result is that, generally speaking, teacher education pays more attention to the "how-to-do-it" question than to the "why-do-we-do-it" question, and expends more energy on what is than on what ought to be. Even major conferences (TEPS 1958-59-60) and the major alternative teacher education curriculum model projects (USOE, 1969) have failed to alter this fundamental orientation, or even to challenge it.

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